

COPIES AND EXTRACTS

OF

LETTERS

FROM

Settlers in Upper Canada.

LONDON:

MARCHANT, PRINTER, INGRAM-COURT, FENCHURCH-STREET.

1833.

LETTERS,

&c. &c.

No. 44, First Concession of North Easthope,
Avon, Huron Tract, Upper Canada, North
America, July 17th, 1833.

MY DEAREST FATHER,—In your second letter you seem desirous to know about the climate, towns, travelling, &c. of this country: with regard to the climate, I have experienced the four seasons; as it was this day twelve-months I reached my farm, the spring, summer, and fall are as near the temperature of the climate of Ireland as I can describe, but of the two, more pleasant, the winter is longer, it borrows a little from the spring and fall, but in it there is very little rain, a deep snow generally falls about December and remains on the ground until March, during which time the weather is frosty, dry, bracing, and wholesome, the Canadian ladies are like the seven sleepers until this season (winter) comes on, then you will see them driving in all directions in their sleighs, wrapped up in buffalo skins, &c. they seem entirely a colder sort of people than Europeans, there was not a day last winter that I could feel the loss of my coat going through the woods in two or three feet of snow.

As to towns the Upper Province being yet a new country, the towns are only in their infancy, but it is really surprising with what rapidity they increase, I was astonished to see some of them through which I came, when the people told me that only four years ago the same place was a howling wilderness; there has been this season a town laid out within one mile of my house, it is called *Avon*, there is already a saw-mill, and

flour-mill, and a post and land agency office, a church and chapel, besides settlers dwelling houses commencing, business is not carried on here in the same old ding dong way of the mason's trowel and hammer that ye have, in one week a man can get a frame house raised fit for any person; you mention having got a Treatise on Canada by Martin Doyle, I think you may place every confidence in his account of Huron, by a reference to the map attached to that book, you may trace my route from Quebec to Easthope, by Montreal, Prescott, York, &c. also in the map of the Huron Tract, which is at the foot of the other, you can see how beautifully intersected that part of the block where I live is, with rivers and streams, all of which abound with fish. The mode of travelling in the winter is in sleighs drawn by horses, with a light sleigh or cutter and one horse you can travel fifty or sixty miles a day; in the other seasons horses and waggons are the mode of conveyance; since I wrote the above I looked over Martin Doyle, and fully agree with his account of the climate, in the 14th and following pages, and in the 28th page at the 12th line you will find an account of the road on which I live, it is a very public one, the stage coach will soon be running on from York to Goderich, every day. My dear Father, I am still continuing, thank God, to get on well in my health and business, I have now twenty acres of my land cleared, and my stock and crops doing well, I have six acres of wheat and oats as high as myself almost fit to reap, two acres of very fine potatoes, with turnips, pumpkins, Indian corn, and all sorts of vegetables; land is getting into such demand here that the government and Canada Company are about raising their prices, therefore, if you determine to come lose no time, I hope your health will rather improve by the change, along with leaving all the broils and disturbances of unfortunate Ireland; in my second letter which I hope you have now, there were some articles mentioned which I thought would be necessary for you to bring out, in addition to which you should bring your bed and window hangings, carpets, fire irons, all sorts of vegetable and flower seeds, and a fishing line, and small hooks tied on gut. New York is the safest and most expeditious way of coming here, but then it is by far the most expensive, there is scarcely any thing but they charge duty on there, by having a sober and gentlemanly

captain, and a good vessel such as we had, there is but little danger in coming by Quebec. I hope Mr. R. still talks of coming to the New World, do not let him put it off, for every hour is so much taken from his new life, you did not mention anything about Uncle Edward's coming, if I was in Ireland again, and just to know what I do now, I would come here. I am sorry to hear such an account of poor Ireland. I know nothing of Mr. L. since I left Quebec, himself and son got there safe and well, he got employment the moment he arrived in a provision store.

I would wish to enumerate all my friends in Cashel to whom I would be remembered, but want of space obliges me to conclude, however, give my love to them all, and

I remain, my dearest Father,

Your affectionate son,

(Signed)

J. STINSON.

P.S. My dear Father, you cannot conceive how fast the people of almost all countries are pouring in here, the number of emigrants landed in York, Upper Canada, between May and October 1832 is 17,388. You do not mention anything to me about my brother and sisters, I wish I had them here.

Sleighs are vehicles without wheels, and go so smooth on the snow you would scarcely feel yourself in them.

A person cannot bring too many feather beds and clothes here, bed screws would be useful also.

To Mr. Alexander Stinson,

Cashel, County of Tipperary,

Ireland.

(COPY.)

Paisley Block, Guelph, Upper Canada,

21st July, 1833.

MY DEAR COUSIN,—It is with pleasure I sit myself down on the bare floor, as I have nothing else to sit upon, to write a few lines to you. I shall not trouble you with a lengthened prologue or preface; I shall, therefore, as my paper is so

small, proceed to inform you of what I think you are most anxious to know, in as concise a manner as possible. I do not think it would be at all interesting were I to enumerate all our privations and hardships from the time we left England to our arrival here; I will therefore pass over that part of our history, and confine myself to what we at present are, and what we at present enjoy. When we got to Guelph we opened our eyes and gained information before we located; and the property that we have purchased we considered to be of all that we had seen the most likely to suit us; we have 108 acres of good land, fifteen acres of which are cleared; we have five acres of wheat, which is looking as well as can be wished, and which I believe will be ripe for the sickle about the middle of August: we have five acres of oats and nearly two acres of potatoes, the greater part of which we have planted ourselves; for this we have given £175 currency; £100 we paid to the man whom it belonged, which paid him reasonably for the clearance and crop, and an instalment that he had paid to the Canada Company on purchasing; we paid an instalment of £15, so that we have £60 to pay in five years, viz. £15 in two years, £15 in three years, £15 in four years, and £15 in five years. We have about eight acres of swamp. We have a fine spring of water, which rises in and runs through our lot. We have bought two good cows with their calves; the calves we are rearing, the cows yield us a most plentiful supply of milk, they give on an average eighteen quarts a day; we gave for them fifty-three dollars; a dollar here is 5s. 0d. currency, (or 4s. 6d. sterling); they live entirely in the woods, and cost us nothing keeping; they come up to be milked morning and evening regularly, for which we reward them with a trifle of bran. We have a lot of fowls which my wife has had given her; we have also four dogs; we are busy getting in some turnips for winter fodder; we are about buying a yoke of oxen, they are about seventy dollars a yoke; we intend having a couple of horses in the spring; horses are on an average eighty dollars each, good ones. We are erecting a beautiful frame house, which will be the finest in this part of the country; we contracted with a carpenter to do the wood work for £35. The house will be built entirely of wood after the fashion of the country, but I do assure you they look much

more neat and respectable than brick houses do. The length of it is thirty-two feet, the breadth twenty feet, five sash windows to the front and four to the back; a passage runs through the centre, with a door front and back, and the stairs go up in the passage; the roof will project over twelve inches, and the outside will be painted white; there will also be a chimney at each end. We lads have dug a cellar twenty by fourteen and six feet deep. I expect the house will be finished in a short time, or as brother Jonathan says, "right off." We have got all the stone ourselves, and done a variety of jobs that has saved us a great deal of money. I should have mentioned that we have sown our five acres of wheat with grass seeds. We live at the present in places called shanties, which are mere temporary cobblements put up in a rough manner, viz. boards piled up and a hole in the side to creep in at. Now in such a duck hull as this, myself and wife contrive to live; we have our bed on the floor, and whenever we have a fire we are nearly poisoned with smoke; when it rains, also, it comes into bed to us delightfully; but never mind that, I do not care a fig. My father and brothers live in a much better place; it consists of four poles driven into the earth and boarded at the sides, and is in every respect genteel compared to mine.

It now remains for me to say something of the country, and how we like it, &c. Now this I apprehend is what you want to know most about; then, to tell you in one word, we are all perfectly satisfied; we have not hopped out of a frying-pan into a fire, but out of a fire into a frying-pan. I have found things as I expected I should do; and what I read at home concerning Canada has proved to be correct; in this I am not mistaken, it is solid fact. My father's property at home, which was doing us no good, has here purchased for us a maintenance for life, as well as put us in possession of independence and comfort. We have exchanged a life fraught with care and anxiety, a life of hubbub, toil, and never-ceasing trouble, for one in connexion with which there is no care, no anxiety, and no dismal forebodings as to the future, for to-morrow here taketh care for itself. My father says, he would never mind encountering the same privations over again to put us in possession of the same independence; he feels

more than satisfied ; he says, moreover, that he never felt so rich in his life, and never knew what riches were until now. We feel rich ; we are little kings, and do enjoy such health as we perhaps never did before. We can here work a day beneath the rays of a burning sun ; we can in turn be wet to the skin three times a day, and still enjoy it all. We live here as the patriarchs of old, on plain and homely fare ; whilst the lowing of the cattle, and other rural sounds, impress my mind with a conviction that these are such times as they experienced, and which I have impatiently and ardently longed and hoped for. We are here farmers to all intents and purposes ; the land appears to me to bring forth its increase abundantly, and will continue to do so to the end of time. We do not go about here soliciting orders, and bowing and endeavouring to please and serve this man or the other ; no, no ; the scene has changed altogether ; we are all rich people here, and all independent ; we feel here our importance as men, as rational beings endowed with the power of thinking and acting ; we do as we like, for there is none to control us. We have here the wild woods in which to rove at will, together with the advantages of shooting what we like, as here is game of all sorts, bears, wolves, foxes, pheasants, deer, partridges, and nobody knows what besides, and nobody cares ; I would not exchange the life that I lead with the best mechanic that ever breathed, or ever will do. Canada, as I have said before, is a land of peace and plenty, blest with everything that can render it delightful to an independent spirit ; here is no poverty here, a beggar was never known. " Plenty to eat and nought to pay, this is the land we live in."

In a short time, if Providence continue to bless us with health, we shall have herds of cattle of all kinds ; in another year, all being well, I hope to have my expectations fulfilled or realized, as by that time we shall have some outbuildings finished, together with barns, stables, &c. It is, as I said before, the best place for the industrious of all classes to come unto, for according to the extent of their labour will be the extent of their riches, and these riches will not merely consist of cleared farms, and flocks, and herds, but of money too, for here is a market for every commodity that the farmer can raise, and a good market too : potatoes are selling now at

2s. 6d. per bushel, wheat 5s. per bushel ; it is all humbug to suppose there is no money-market, for if the farmer should not feel disposed to sell in Guelph, he can take his produce to Hamilton or Dundas, and get money for it there too, so that, whenever you hear any one speak contrary to this, contradict them, and do not suffer them to be led away with such folly. There is another thing I will just set you right in, and that is the *tree-stumps* ; it is said that these require twenty or thirty years to destroy them ; now know from me that five years will destroy some of the largest stumps, and some will rot out in three years. Our clearance is not a year old, and a number of our stumps are already so far decayed that I have pulled them up myself. Out of the number of instances that I could bring forward of persons getting rich in this country I will only mention one, and that is our neighbour, a Yorkshireman ; he came here three years ago ; he then had but 2s. 6d. and an axe : well, he set to work mightily, and now he has 100 acres of land, a herd of cattle, fine crops, &c. and what he has done at his land is worth £375, and he has cleared this last year £100 ; now this has been done in this short time—where now is there a man in England that can do or get one-fourth of this ? We, in like manner, must get rich, for we save all our wages, our cattle will continually increase, and thus every thing will go on progressively and prosperously ; but as fine a country as this is, I would never advise any individual to come here, on account of so many coming and find themselves disappointed, and who never would be satisfied with any thing in nature. Now here is a man in Guelph employed by a gentleman who related to me the story, who, when in England, could only get 12s. per week, and this gentleman was giving him 10s. a day, yet the man grumbled ; the fact is, the country cannot suit all, and for the reason already given I should never advise any person to come for fear they should feel disappointed. There is another little matter I wish to set you right in, and that is society here ; now I would not have you think that there are none here but pauper lunatics, for when we first reached Guelph we were agreeably surprised to see a number of gentleman dressed in white trousers, flannel jackets, and straw hats playing at cricket on the green, and they were quite adepts at the game ; they meet to play every Saturday. And

then again the people are all civil and well behaved, more so than ever I found them at home; even in the most remote townships you will find them quite polite and agreeable. A Scotch church is already built at Guelph, as well as a Catholic church, an English church is building; and when things get put to rights we intend having a light waggon to take us to town, the Scotch, the Church of England, and the Methodists, all at present preach and worship in one place by turns.

I can now tell you how hot it has been since we have been here. Once my thermometer stood at 88, but the average heat is 82 to 84, and sometimes it will drop to 50 in the night, and sometimes to 40, yet it is all right and all comfortable, we feel nothing of these great changes. We intend making a dam on our stream for water-fowl, &c.; we go here without stockings, handkerchief, coat, and waistcoat, and this altogether through choice, and we are just as comfortable with only trousers, shoes, and straw hats, as you with all your clothing on. I see now that I must be bringing matters to a conclusion; you must tell Mr. D. that if ever he thinks of coming here, he had better do so as soon as possible, or else for ever be nothing more and his children after him than humble obedient slaves; my reason for saying so is, land is getting dearer every succeeding year, and in a few years there will be no purchasing land but at an enormous price; if, therefore, he should ever think of coming, it would be well for him not to do so without first receiving from me a letter of instructions.

Your affectionate cousin,

(Signed) JOHN NEWTON.

P.S.—When a person comes to Canada it requires great resolution in order to prevent himself from being heartbroken at the sight of such a number of big trees which are all to be tumbled to the earth by his arm alone. I have seen a tree three yards in diameter.

*To Mr. Joseph Mappin,
Far-Gate, Sheffield, Yorkshire.*

Extracts from Letters of Mr. JAMES KEMP, formerly of East Lothian, but now of Goderick, Upper Canada.

" 14th July, 1832.

" I LIKE this place better than any I have seen in Canada, and I believe the climate is also better. It was generally said that the summer here was very warm, but I have rarely felt it disagreeably so, and never so warm but I could work well enough in the shade; indeed I have felt it as warm in Scotland as I have done here. I should think this as healthy a place as any in America.

" Before we got this length, people tried to dissuade us from coming forward, saying that almost every person had fever and ague; but I have only heard of two or three who have got ague. We have a fine stream of water running through our lot; most of the water is bad, especially in the Lower Province. The Canada Company have sold a great deal of land this season; it is probable they will rise their price next year, as their land is by far the cheapest in Canada.

" 8th January, 1833.

" I AM well pleased with this part of the country, and have enjoyed good health. So far as I saw of Lower Canada, it is not to be compared to the land here, and I would advise no person to stop there, as they will be far better in the Upper Province. Land can be cleared and fenced just now for less than £5 per acre, but wages are always higher in summer; a person coming here with a little money, and employing men to clear land for him, will be nearly paid his outlay the first year.

" 4th June, 1833.

" IT will be a number of years before we can raise more than will be consumed in the neighbourhood; but we can get it shipped in any direction. The Upper Canada wheat brings always a higher price at Montreal than that of Lower Canada."

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